MATWATCH

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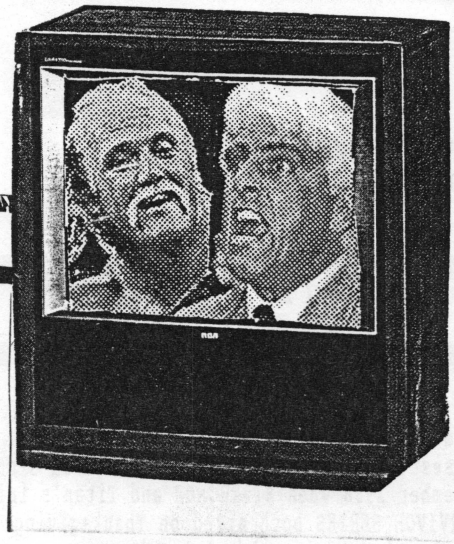
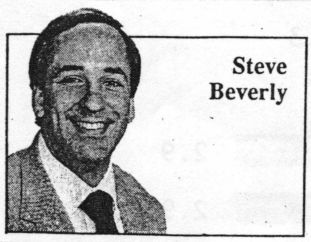


WWF, VIEWER'S CHOICE FLAP SETTLED; RUMBLE TO ROLL

Titan Sports and pay-cable distributor Viewer's Choice have agreed to a new seven-year deal to continue carriage of World Wrestling Federation events on VC's 5.5 million homes and cable systems which deal with VC on a per-event basis serving another three million subscribers.

The new agreement, reached Thursday in New York, staves off a blackout of Sunday's ROYAL RUMBLE from Orlando by eight cable companies which co-own VC but some systems may still not carry the show. Though publicly claiming eight million homes, despite the VC blackout, a knowledgeable cable observer told MATWATCH, "There's no way the WWF would have cleared more than five million homes and a lot would have been outside its top-drawing region in the Northeast.



Steve Beverly

The pact, said to continue a split of 40 per cent of pay revenues to Titan and 60 per cent to be divided between VC and cable operators, is considered a victory for the cable industry, though Titan sources call it "a victory for all parties.

The dispute erupted over a Titan effort to reduce cable operators' revenues, a move which nearly jeopardized last year's WRESTLEMANIA V, and Titan's desire to self-market its shows on a system-by-system basis.

But cable executives were outraged over WWF chief Vince McMahon's using his recent shows to cast cable operators as villains. Veteran media analyst Mike Thompson told MATWATCH, "Vince will try to appear the hero now. But there was no way he was getting a better money deal from cable when he took his case on the air. What really ticked off the cable people was not so much his appeal for viewers to call and protest the blackout but the fact that he used 41 out of 50 minutes after the NO HOLDS BARRED showing (Dec. 27) to blast them and viewers were paying money to listen to it."

Though running through 1996, the deal is non-exclusive for Titan. Viewer's Choice will continue to offer Ted Turner's NWA events and independent shows, such as the December WOMEN'S WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP.

What hampers VC owners is the accord was struck only ten days before RUMBLE, leaving little time for promotion. "We've been operating under the assumption we wouldn't have the show," said one operator who requested anonymity. "But the ROYAL RUMBLE is not one of our big draws, so it may not matter." Last year's RUMBLE attracted the lowest buy-rate ever (estimated at 1.4%, same as revised projections show for the recent NWA STARRCADE) for a WWF show.

While the war between Titan and VC has been waged mostly in broadcast publications, Thompson believes McMahon may have engineered it. "If you stop and think, the ROYAL RUMBLE is a nothing show," said Thompson. "While I don't believe McMahon would deliberately jeopardize carriage on 6-8 million homes, can you think of a better way to generate publicity in a fresh way for a dud event than to cast somebody new---the cable operator---as the heavy?"

(COMMENTARY: I found no fault with McMahon taking his case to viewers on NO HOLDS or last Monday's PRIME TIME WRESTLING. It was hardly unethical, as one cable exec charged...no more so than when President Reagan would turn to the nation in a TV speech to solicit support for bills Congress had stonewalled.

Nor was this issue a conspiracy on the part of cable operators. The Viewer's Choice co-owners have a business to protect. If you own a company and the price and terms of doing business with a vendor are unacceptable, ultimately, you cease doing business with that entity.

I do feel both parties have some answering to do on the issue. In the case of McMahon, using 41 of 50 minutes on NO HOLDS, with viewers paying $12 to $15 a pop, strictly for RUMBLE hype and in an undisguised attempt to bash cable, was a blatant disregard for subscribers' money. It's as if Vince will next decide to charge viewers $3 a pop just to watch the "infomercial" which plugs his shows on the pay channel. Plus, just as when McMahon underestimated the cable industry when unsuccessfully tried to freeze Turner out of the pay market last year, he wasn't about to forego the revenue those Viewer's Choice homes bring WRESTLEMANIA.

As for the cable industry, while I equally support their right to protect their business, some of the public comments made by executives smacked of a similar disregard for the consumer, one telling BROADCASTING magazine that no matter how many calls came in, his company would not carry RUMBLE. Where is the consumer's right to choose in all of this? Of course, for 79 million homes which still do not have pay-per-view capability, it's a non-issue.

Was it another publicity stunt by Vince? Only he knows. But this is the same guy who mounted one of the brilliant promo campaigns for a bad movie I've ever seen. Two weeks after the RUMBLE is over, see if you can remember who won it.

THIS WEEK'S HEADLINES

TBS TELLS PAY, CLASH SCHEDULES FOR YEAR

ATLANTA --- A tentative pay-per-view show only one day before the WWF SUMMER SLAM '90 is a keynote of the schedule of NWA supercards for the rest of the year.

The schedule, which kicks off with CLASH OF THE CHAMPIONS: TEXAS SHOOTOUT in Corpus Christi, again lists five pay shows and four live TBS CLASH specials.

THE GREAT AMERICAN BASH show is tentatively listed for Aug. 26. Insiders say it's planned as an afternoon

(Continued on Page 2)

THIS WEEK'S HEADLINES

(Continued from Page 1)

card the day before SUMMER SLAM. It's the closest to a same-day pay confrontation since November 1988 when STARRCADE and Titan's initial SURVIVOR SERIES both aired on Thanksgiving Day. The event date is subject to change.

Other pay dates on the WCW slate include: WRESTLE WAR '90 (Feb. 25), SUMMER SIZZLER (June), HALLOWEEN HAVOC (tentatively Oct. 27) and STARRCADE (Dec. 12).

CLASH specials are listed for Feb. 6, an June 13, Sept. 12 and Nov. 14.

BARRY WINDHAM NOT EXPECTED BACK IN WWF

STAMFORD CT --- Former NWA U.S. champion and WIDOWMAKER character Barry Windham is not expected to return to the WWF, a source close to Titan Sports says.

The source emphasized Windham has not been fired, nor has he quit. But the one-time heir apparent to Ric Flair's NWA world belt has not appeared on a Titan show since October, at first because of surgery.

Windham's father and brother, Blackjack Mulligan and Kendall Windham, await trial on federal charges of passing counterfeit bills in Florida. But the source says Titan does not believe the family problem is the key reason Barry has stayed away from bookings. Barry was fired from the NWA in March amid charges of failing to have alleged necessary surgery. Windham was also accused of attemping to wrest control of NWA booking chores.

NWA REVERTS TO 4-DAY ARENA SKED IN MARCH

ATLANTA --- A more efficient work schedule is shortly in store for NWA wrestlers.

Effective in March, primary NWA arena cards will move to a Thursday-through-Sunday weekly schedule. Tenative plans are to tape syndicated TV Mondays and WCW Tuesdays.

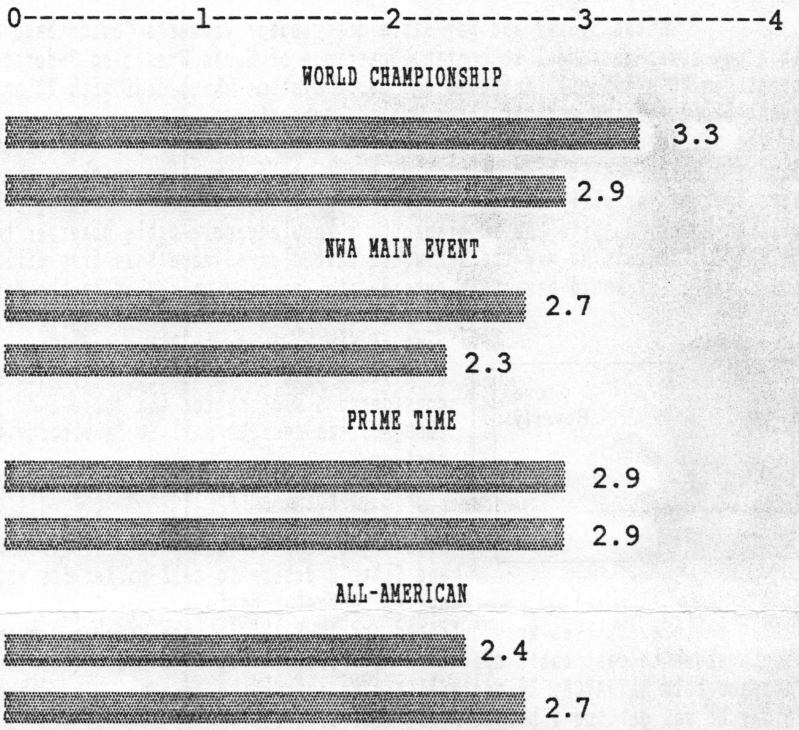
Most weeks, wrestlers will have Wednesdays off and will fly out of Atlanta Thursdays. The move could save an estimated $500,000 annually in travel costs.

Syndication will likely revert to driving distance locations from Atlanta with WCW possibly alternating between the Center Stage and arenas such as Marietta's Cobb County Civic Center.

PINFALL PROFILE

THE DECEMBER STORY

RATING AVERAGES



Top Graphs (Dec. 1989), Bottom Graphs (Dec. 1988)

The fall surge of TBS' WCW was capped with a December showing of a 3.3 rating and 6.5 share, top audience levels since May 1988. Even in contrast to the hot Dusty Rhodes angles of last year, WCW was up 13%.

PTW revived from down months in October and November. The 2.9/4.4 was flat over last December but up 2% over November 1989 ratings.

NWA MAIN EVENT posted an impressive annual gain as well. Last December with TBS was in the last month of NME reruns (Kevin Sullivan vs. Big Bear Collie 4 times, i.e.). This December's 2.7 was up 17% over last year and TBS is pleased with the 5.1 share, a 27% gain.

ALL-AMERICAN dropped for the third straight month. The 2.4/5.9 was not just attributable to NFL competition but to viewer rejection of the Gorilla Monsoon-Hillbilly Jim calls. ALL-AM was down 11% from Dec. '89.

TRENDS TO WATCH: Whether regular network fare affects PTW as much as Monday Night Football. With no NFL opposite, the Jan. 8 show resurged to a 3.2. WCW should stay solid but a question mark is how the weaker lead-in of two fishing shows will affect its first hour. Key for NME will be its quality of matches. The JEFFERSONS lead-in will be strong and NME, too, won't face the NFL, come February. POWER HOUR, which slipped 13% from November, could be hurt by TBS' new lead-in of family movies. The demographic flow may not be compatible. POWER squandered 39% of its lead-in from "The Adventures of the Wilderness Family" Jan. 6. As for ALL-AMERICAN, a safe bet is personnel changes are coming. Hillbilly wasn't a born announcer.

(For weekly RATINGS RAP, see Page 6)

SCALE: PINFALL! - Must See. PILEDRIVER - Excellent. POWERSLAM - Good. DRAW - Average RESTHOLD - Fair. BOMB - Poor. PLUS - Midscale rating.

(PORTLAND) - Jonathan Holliday d. Bill Francis by countout; Steve Doll d. Al Madril on reversal when Veronica trips up Doll but Ginger tells ref and Veronica & Ginger have to be separated; Grappler/Brian Adams d. Beetlejuice/Jeff Warner when Holliday powderpuffs Warner's eyes. Adams puts full nelson on BJ but Billy Jack Haynes saves. As he tries for full nelson on Grappler, Adams attacks & gets nelson on Haynes, who has to be pried free; NORTHWEST TITLE: Scotty the Body d. Rip Oliver on reversal when Veronica distracts ref & Scotty knucks but Oliver gets them & decks Scotty for pin but Rip didn't hide knucks; The Equalizer vs. Rex King in progress as show ends. ANGLE: Veronica & Ginger get into it during interview. Scotty separates them, threatening to hit Ginger. Doll comes out and challenges for mixed match. Scotty refuses but Don Owen orders it. DRAW.

(PWF) - Tyree Pride d. Coconut Kid; Nasty Boys d. Dennis Knight/Jimmy Backlund; ANGLE: Brickhouse Brown's opponent fails to show so Steve Keirn challenges & Brickhouse leaves; Ron Slinker d. Tim Parker; Lou Perez d. Wild Thing; Mark Starr d. Mike Awesome. BOMB.

(LUCHA LIBRE/W.I.N.) - Superboy/Relampajo/Suicida Pilota d. KKK/Nino Asesino; Eddie Guererro d. Ghengis Khan; Mercenaries I/II/III d. Alas dePlata/Bello Adan/Caballero 2000; Conan/Rey Misterio d. Caballero de la Muerte/Tornado Negro; Bobby Bradley/Falcon deOro d. Black Gordman/Ari Romero by DQ. DRAW-PLUS.

(WWF/SYND.) - [CHALLENGE]: Jake Roberts d. George South; Rick Rude vs. Larry Fontana; Brutus Beefcake d. Tom Burton; Honky Tonk Man/Greg Valentine d. Reno Riggins/Breakdance Young; Curt Hennig d. Mario Mancini. BOMB-PLUS.
[SUPERSTARS]: Rockers d. Mike Davis/Lee Peek; Tito Santana d. Mike Sharpe; Jim Duggan d. Tom Burton; Rick Martel d. Jerry Monte; Other winners: Earthquake Tenta, Ted DiBiase; REPLAY: Beefcake tears up Martel's coat. BRO. LUV: Ultimate Warrior vows to win RUMBLE. BOMB-PLUS.

(WWF/USA) - [PRIME TIME]: (MAIN EVENT) Dino Bravo d. Tito Santana; REPLAY: (WWF TAG TITLE) Andre/Haku d. Demolition; Roddy Piper d. Burton; MEAN GENE: w. Randy Savage & Sherri; Ted DiBiase d. Dale Wolfe; Jim Duggan d. Craig Green; Bad News Brown d. Paul Roma; Honky/Valentine d. Riggins/Young; Koko B. Ware d. Iron Mike Sharpe. GUEST: Arnold Skaaland urges viewers to complain to cable operators. RESTHOLD.

(SCW) - New Nightmares (Steve Lawler/Dino Minnelli) d. Stegger/Horne; Junkyard Dog d. War Daddy; Joyce Grable d. Heaven Lee; Chic Donovan/Jim Powell d. Mike Golden/Mr. Atlanta; U.S. JR. TITLE: Ted Allen d. Invader. BOMB-PLUS.

(NWA/TBS) - [POWER HOUR]: Steve Williams d. Brodie Chase; (From WWN): (NWA WORLD TITLE) Ric Flair d. Eddie Gilbert; WNN: Gordon Solie discusses Williams' career & says Kerry Von Erich may join NWA; (NWA TV TITLE) Arn Anderson d. Great Muta for belt; FUNK'S GRILL: Kevin Sullivan says Norman must remind Terry of his brother, Dory; ANGLE: Buzz Sawyer challenges Arn for TV belt next week. POWERSLAM.
[MAIN EVENT]: (From CLASH I) Flair draw vs. Sting; Rock & Roll Express d. Freebirds by DQ when Midnight Express runs in but Dynamic Dudes save & 8-man brawl erupts; Sting d. Dragonmaster; Lex Luger wins squash. POWERSLAM.
[WCW]: Sting d. Bob Cook; DOOMED d. Agent Steel/Paul Drake; REPLAY: Sullivan jumps Norman after WOMAN smashes his "portrait;" R&R Ex d. State Patrol; LOUISVILLE SLUGGER: WOMAN tells Flair she'd like to own the Horsemen; Ranger Ross d. Chase; Williams d. Fargo; Luger d. Pat Rose; Brian Pillman/Tom Zenk d. Italian Stallion/Randy Harris; Lee Scott d. Cactus Jack Manson by reversal, when Cactus gives Lee a Cactus-crasher after beating him; Anderson d. Hacksaw Higgins; Michael Hayes d. Ricky Nelson; M Ex d. Gene Ligon/Sean Regal; New Skyscrapers d. Rick Ryder/Larry Santo. RESTHOLD.

TV TEMPO

Jan. 8-14

(NWA/SYND.) - [WORLD WIDE]: 6-MAN: J-Tex d. Scott/Regal/Nelson; FUNK'S GRILL: WOMAN comes out & tells Terry & Flair Ric can't resist her; Anderson d. Rose; Steiners d. Cactus/Ryder & Cactus beats up Rick after; Pillman d. Galaxian; Sting d. Higgins. BOMB-PLUS.
[NWA PRO]: Samoans d. Ned Brady/Drake; Royal Family d. Ligon/Stallion; DOOMED d. Fargo/Cook; Williams d. Harris; R&R Ex d. Nightmares (Danny Davis/Ken Wayne). RESTHOLD.

(AWA/ESPN) - TEAM CHALLENGE 6-MAN BATTLE ROYAL: Texas Hangmen win when Spoiled Rotten Stuart pulls Paul Diamond over top rope from outside. Diamond & Stuart brawl. BOMB-PLUS.

(USWA) - B.J. Travis d. J.J. Funk by pulling tights; Kevin Von Erich d. Sheik Braddock; Gary Young no contest vs. Dustin Rhodes when both battle over chair, which Dustin eventually uses to clobber Skandor Akbar; USWA TAG TITLE: Stud Stable vs. Jeff Jarrett/Matt Borne no contest when P.Y. Chu'i jumps off top on Matt (who stretchers). DRAW.

(CWA) - [All From USWA]: (RECAP) Young-Rhodes feud; Young d. Jesse James; Rhodes d. Latin Lover; Jarrett/Borne d. Travis/Chu'i; VIDEOS: Tony Anthony, Todd Champion; Stud Stable d. Funk/Chris Torrez. RESTHOLD-PLUS.

(ICW) - Ray Oddyssey d. The Henchman; INTERVIEW: Tony Atlas & the Duke; Super Duper Mario d. Willie Winkin'; RECAP: (ICW TAG TITLE) Dynamic Duo d. Undertakers; Duo d. Campbell/Reed; Dennis Condrey/Doug Gilbert d. Chris Michaels/S.D. Jones; Vic Steamboat d. Atlas by DQ; RESTHOLD-PLUS.

LINES OF THE WEEK

1. Cactus Jack Manson, WNYG Radio: "If the place is called Madison Square Garden, how come they don't have any plants in there?" 2. Manson & John Arezzi, WNYG, on Flair's plastic bag angle: (CJM) "Flair had been drinking that night." (JA) "What do you mean?" (CJM) "Yeah, Flair was

passing the bag." 3. Dallas Page, PWF, on Jim Backlund ta king atomic drop: "Gigolo doesn't want to get back in there after that ballbreaker." 4. Jesse Ventura/Vince McMahon, WWF: (VM) "Jesse, do you know anything about Dr. Wehrner Von Braun, for whom this building was named?" (JV) "Wasn't he the guy who played Col. Klink....or was it Sgt. Shultz?" (VM) "Whatever, it's HOGAN'S HEROES here in Huntsville." 5. Jim Cornette, PH, on Dr. Death: "He won his letter but somebody had to read it to him." 6. Cornette, PH, on Jim Ross: "He went on two diets. He couldn't get enough to eat on one." 7. Ventura, WWF: "Other than being janitors at NASA, what could Duggan's relatives do?" 8. Chris Cruise/ Terry Funk, PH: (CC) "Are you saying WOMAN's after Ric Flair?" (TF) "Crispy, I'm saying she's after about any man around." 9. Lance Russell, NME, on Norman's art: "Nobody said he was a Rembrandt." 10. Bobby Heenan, PTW: "The Royal Rumble look is when you have TUMS."

11. Terrence Garvin, USWA: "Have you been drinking, Marc? If I had a face like yours, I'd fill it with cheap beer, too." 12. Sgt. Slaughter, LPWA: "The ref got knocked down once. It looked like inintentional. But the second one was intentionable." 13. Arn Anderson, PH: "Sawyer, there's only one thing missing from your entourage & that's those teeth I knocked out last night." 14. Funk & Kevin Sullivan, PH: (KS) "That nitwit (Norman) either looks like someone you know or he reminds you of your brother, Dory." (TF) "I think you're calling my brother a nitwit." 15. Cornette, PH: "The people have asked me to give the fans a little respect, so I give them as little respect as I can." 16. Garvin & Marc Lowrance, USWA: (TG) "I have a personal hairdresser who does my hair." (ML) "Yeah, her name is Attilla the Hun." 17. Cornette, PH: "The referee is the nicest-looking guy in the ring and he looks like he had a fire put out on his face." 18. Ross & Corny, PH: (JC) "There's a picture of me in the WRESTLING WRAPUP." (JR) "Suitable for darts." 19. Ross & Corny, PH: (JR) "Look in the mirror." (JC) "I do, quite often." 20. Sherri Martel, PTW, on Sapphire: "If she sticks her finger in my face, I'll send her back to Moms Mableyland."

21. Vince & Jesse, WWF: (VM) "Jesse, if you tried a dropkick, you'd probably kick somebody's knees. (JV) "Only if it was Andre." 22. Ross, WCW, on Pillman: "He's quicker than a hiccup." 23. Ross, WCW, on Pillman: "He's harder to catch than blowing smoke through a keyhole." 24. Ross, WCW: "For wrestling trivia buffs, Lee Scott's first main event on TV was Jan. 13, 1990." 25. Sullivan, WCW: "Cactus Jack has burned the candle at both ends & in the middle." 26. TBS promo announcer on Freebirds: "They're so cool they make James Dean look like Jerry Lewis." 26. Cornette, WCW, on M Ex: "They rate right up there with arthritis & polio as cripplers."

STRONGEST COMMENTS - 1. Heenan, PTW, on Sherri: "She needs to spend less time on her makeup & a little more time shaving under her armpits." 2. Ross, WCW, on Corny: "I don't even think he'd be welcome in the Vatican with Noriega." 3. Lowrance, USWA, to Garvin: "You're really a sick individual." 4. Cruise, PH: "Flair was returning the stares, if not the affection, of WOMAN and Nitron." 5. Sullivan, PH, to Funk: "The thing I admired most about your career is you had no compassion." 6. Ross & Corny, PH: (JC) "It would take Batman, Robin & the Gotham City police for Arn Anderson to win the TV title with these 3 guys (J-Tex) out here." (JR) "You don't want to talk about Bruce Wayne & Dick Grayson, do you?" 7. WOMAN, WCW: "To rule the wrestling world, you've got to own the Horsemen."

QUESTIONS OF THE WEEK - 1. Heenan, PTW: "Have you ever seen Koko (B. Ware) & Sapphire together? I thought they were the same person." 2. Ross, PH: "Are there any nice-looking Orientals?" 3. Jake Roberts, WWF: "How many times can you spit in the wind without getting wet?"

NICKNAMES OF THE WEEK - 1. GERALDO ROSS (Jim Ross on himself). 2. THE FLYING PHYSICIAN (Ross on Doc). 3. THE GEORGE CHUVALO OF WRESTLING (Sullivan on Lee Scott). 4. THE TIMEX OF PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING (Ross on Lee Scott).

BEST PICTURES - 1. TBS, Anderson-Muta match. 2. TBS, Dennis Brent at ringside. 3. USWA, Chu'i's leap onto Borne. 4. TBS, Flair/WOMAN face to face. 5. TBS, Manson's "Cactuscrasher" onto Lee Scott.

ART FLEMING/ALEX TREBEK AWARD - Sullivan, WCW, on Flair & Sting in CLASH cage: "They're in double jeopardy."

INFLATION AWARD - Eric Bishoff, AWA: "Wrestling writers and critics alike have called AWA TEAM CHALLENGE the number one wrestling event in America."

PASSWORD OF THE WEEK - Slaughter, LPWA: "intentionable."

RAP OF THE WEEK - Funk, PH: "Mama Caught a Chicken."

ALL-CLICHE TEAM - 1. Ross, PH: "...time will tell." 2. Garvin, USWA: "...throwing caution to the wind." 3. Sting, WCW: "...last, but not least."

DREADED GLITCH AWARD - TBS, Ross cues to Hayes insert interview which isn't there on WCW.

BOO AWARD - USWA, for using no lights when brawls twice went into the Sportatorium crowd.

TUBE TALK

The New Jersey Assembly passed the bill deregulating wrestling, 44-4. But Gov. Thomas Kean (R), who left office Tuesday had not signed the bill as of last weekend....Dustin Rhodes-Gary Young was a good brawl but Dustin's blows still aren't stiff enough....Kerry in the NWA? Come on, Gordon....Syndicator Ray Horn is offering a 13-week series at NATPE called (real original) CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING. It promises a mix of wrestling and '50s and '60s music with groups like the Tokens, the Coasters and the Limelighters.

Danny Wolf & Dan Farren's HOLLYWOOD HEAVYWEIGHT WRESTLING will be at the old Masonic Temple in L.A. Jan. 27. It follows a convention and swap meet for fans, which starts at 3 p.m. You can trade or buy old photos or ring memorabilia. Eric Caidin is handling the swap meet. Call (213) 465-8764 for details. For card info, call (818) 361-7312.

POWER HOUR made a nice comeback. Ross & Cornette were hot for Anderson-Muta, which is an early awards candidate for next year....Anderson defends the TV belt vs. Buzz Sawyer on PH Friday. Chris Adams vs. Eric Embry is on USWA Saturday....Sorry, gang, but unless I'm wrong, this jazz of WOMAN managing the Horsemen is a mistake which is DOOMED... Kudos to Jim Ross for acknowledging the Briscos as world tag champs on WCW. That beats most people in the industry who would have just let it slide. See you next week, PSB.

PHILLY SLAM: SUMMER SLAM '90 has been booked for the Philadelphia Spectrum Aug. 27. Now it will be interesting to see if WCW moves its Aug. 26 BASH pay-per-view.

BUY-RATE UPDATE: Independent cable estimtes now say the STARRCADE buy-rate will likely fall around 1.4%, down from the original figure of 1.8%, which will cost TBS about $1 million in gross revenues, down to $3.6 million.

STING VS. ????: Is it a throw us off clue? Sting will soon be billed as "vs. the NWA world champion" for WRESTLE WAR '90. With promos having Luger saying he'll "be in the match, no matter what," TBS wants people to believe Luger could be the champion by PPV time. I don't buy it.

I QUIT: Atlanta SUPERSTARS OF WRESTLING co-host Randall Brown has left the package. Brown was under fire for starting a 3-hour wrestling block on a LaGrange, Ga., channel (also in the Atlanta market) to compete head-on with WVEU.

SAMMY'S SPOT: Brown's replacement is SCW's Sir Samuel F. Kent, who will become a "softer" heel in an 8-week storyline. Kent will defend the honor of Boni Blackstone to others but insult her himself.

GOOD NUMBERS: Boni's ratings were hot Jan. 6. She averaged a 3.1 for the seven hours, topping local numbers for WTBS and WGNX. USWA and Southern are swapping time slots in the block, SCW to midnight and USWA going to 9 p.m.

FORGIVENESS

True story: Verne Gagne tried luring a former AWA star back last week. Here's part of the phone conversation as told to MATWATCH. We call the star Mr. X:

VERNE: "Why don't you do some shows for ESPN?"

MR. X: "ESPN? Who's on that?"

VERNE: "I am, of course. I'm the ONLY one on ESPN."

MR. X: "Funny, I didn't know Jerry Jarrett did a disappearing act."

VERNE: "You know, I never forgave you for leaving me."

MR. X: "I never forgave you for treating me the way you did."

VERNE: "I never forgave you for going to the NWA."

MR. X: "I never forgave you for having Greg."

NO INOKI YET: New Japan Superpowers did not debut on the Sunshine Network. An ICW episode aired instead.

MATWATCHINGS

NATPE NEWS: Titan and Turner people are all at the NATPE convention in New Orleans this week, where they'll try to upgrade their station lineups. Titan was barred from bringing a ring and staging live matches as in the past.

DESERVING FANS: Siskel & Ebert, in their yearend review, labeled NO HOLDS BARRED one of the worst pix of '89. Ebert called it "disgusting," adding: "It looked like a TV movie. If Hogan has all these faithful fans, they deserve better."

MOVIN' MEDUSA: I'm told on the new LPWA show, Medusa Miceli is much improved, using a number of Japanese moves. Sgt. Slaughter, on one telecast, says he taught her.

WHERE'S THE KIDS?: Terry Funk has already analyzed ratings for NWA syndie shows market-by-market. He's found the hours get killed where they're opposite kids shows on Saturday morning, so expect some outrageous new elements.

FLORIDA FOLLIES: PWF has as much life left as a terminal cancer victim. The ballyhooed stock option plan to raise money is all but dead, the show is on broadcast TV only in Tampa and all Orlando shows are off. Any doubt???

PAUL E. UPDATE: Rumors continue that Mr. Heyman has a March WWF start date but he seems content booking ICW. The last two shows for that indie were much improved.

THE OTHER PACKAGE: The indie package Paul is trying to organize has some kinks. Paul still hasn't taped any BEST OF CWF wraparounds because David Woods is still considering selling the old CWF time slots to Jerry Jarrett.

CACTUS CHATTER: Cactus Jack Manson's recent stint on John Arezzi's New York radio show was a hoot (see LINES OF THE WEEK). He'll guest on FUNK'S GRILL next weekend.

ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS: Cactus had 135 stitches from his auto accident, mostly in his leg. But the NWA guys tell him losing his front teeth is a big boost for his character.

GOOD NEWS, BAD NEWS: The bad news is the NWA had to cancel shows last week in Steubenville OH and Rochester for poor advances. But the same crew sold out Hammond IN Thursday night with 5,400 ($43,200), stunning the guys.

INDIE FRONT: Joel Goodheart has a big show on Jan. 27 at Temple University with Larry Zbyszko (managed by Paul E.) vs. David Sammartino (managed by Bruno) on top. As of last Friday, he had a $10,000 advance. Dennis Coraluzzo ran Woodbury NJ last Saturday with mostly his local guys.

LUNCH WITH JOEL: Joel's SQUARED CIRCLE luncheon this Saturday features the Steiner Brothers. Terry Funk had to back out for producing commitments.

MAIN EVENT: The two-hour NWA MAIN EVENT on TBS Sunday night was a one-week only deal. NME will be pre-empted in its regular slot the next two Sundays but the overnight syndie NME airs in its Monday at 3:30 a.m. slot both weeks.

NEXT WEEK: MATWATCH may be one day late in mailing next week as we are going on a little excursion concerning our career. On the ANNUAL, please be patient. We hope to mail the week of Jan. 28.

RATINGS RAP

CABLE

Week Ending Jan. 8	Rating	Share	Homes
NWA MAIN EVENT (TBS 1/7)	3.2	5.0	1.63 mil.
WWF PRIME TIME (USA 1/8)	3.2	4.6	1.56 mil.
NWA WORLD CHAMP. (TBS 1/6)	2.8	4.7	1.42 mil.
WWF ALL-AMERICAN (USA 1/7)	2.3	5.2	1.17 mil.
NWA POWER HOUR (TBS 1/5)	1.7	2.8	863,000

ANALYSIS: The Flair-Eaton rematch carried NME to impressive numbers opposite the Denver-Pittsburgh playoff game. It marks nine straight weeks an NWA has either led or tied for the top. PTW's jump over a 3 may meant the male audience has returned from being glued to football in fall.

The fishing lead-ins hurt WCW's first hour but the show was lackluster, too, although its final quarter hour jumped to a 3.3/5.7. POWER HOUR lost 39% of the 2.8 TBS movie lead-in during what was a poor effort for PH.

ALL-AM continues its steady, downward trend (see related story on Page 2).

REPEATS: POWER HOUR (TBS 1/6) 0.8/7.4; NME (TBS 1/8) 0.3/3.2. Syndicated ratings were unavailable this week.

ROYAL RUMBLE RAP

Making predictions for the ROYAL RUMBLE is like forecasting if your Christmas shirt from J.C. Penney has a flaw. You know it probably does but you think little about it.

The first RUMBLE was entertaining, if for no other reason than it was a creative variation on the old battle royal and markedly embarrassed the third annual NWA DUSTY RHODES BUNKHOUSE STAMPEDE. But there was little memorable about the show. How many of you recall the appearance of the Jumping Bomb Angels from Japan?

Last year's highlights included the abominable color commentary by Sherri Martel during an equally excruciating Robin Smith-Judy Martin match, along with the offbeat open of having Demolition Ax and Smash start the actual RUMBLE against each other. It was no big deal that we predicted in MATWATCH John Studd would win. He did but he didn't stay.

I still contend this should be a USA Cable special, rather than a weak pay show but here's my picks anyway: expect the Bushwackers to take the Rougeaus for a third and, hopefully, last time. Since Ronnie Garvin has lost most of his matchups with Greg Valentine in the past, I'll take Ronnie. But I'd have cared more five years ago. Jim Duggan will get a win and look for Brutus Beefcake to take care of Genius Poffo but Rick Martel will likely get involved.

As for the RUMBLE itself, there is no clear choice this year. Had Barry Windham been here, this may have been the event to build him as a major WWF contender. It could have been a retirement gift for Andre but he has half a tag title now. I wouldn't think it would be Ultimate Warrior except in the unlikely possibility he and Hulk Hogan would be the two finalists and Warrior would turn on Hulk to win. That's too obvious.

So I've narrowed it to three: Roddy Piper, Bubba Bossman and Dusty Rhodes. Piper's not getting a belt, is off PTW and is weary working weekend double-shots. A win for Rod could be a consolation "get over" pop that ends quickly. Bubba has already turned babyface at WWF TV tapings and a win for him could amplify that. Don't be surprised at it.

But I'm going with something crazy. Vince McMahon is just loony enough to do something like I'm about to predict and [illegible] at the WWF. Bubba is getting no title here, either. But since this is, indeed, a meaningless show, why not continue his BUNKHOUSE STAMPEDE tradition in the state of his once-great popularity. Chalk up a pick for the Big Ball of Cholesterol in an upset but don't make us listen to that awful music.

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